

Statement by Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio

February 12, 1968

Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio of Newark today endorsed the report of the Governor's Select Commission on Civil Disorders and acted to investigate charges of city corruption, but added he "wished the Commission had hit harder at racism, black as well as white, and made absolutely clear that rioting must not and will not be permitted in American life."

"It would be very sad, indeed, if charges of local corruption covered the real problems of Negroes in American life and if the commission's report was interpreted as a mandate to riot by those impatient with democracy and ~~the~~ political process," Addonizio said.

In endorsing the report, the Mayor pledged "fast action" on its recommendations. Giving the corruption issue top priority, he established a special gambling squad and named as its head, a Deputy Police Chief who had told the commission that "gambling was very prevalent" in the city.

Named to head the Squad was Deputy Chief John Redden, who testified before the commission:

"Based on my own experience...I would say that gambling was very prevalent. It is a very large business."

The Mayor also announced that Redden, a frequent critic of political interference in the Police Department, would be asked to "hand-pick the men he wants on the squad.....the men he thinks can do the job."

The Mayor said he "fully supported" the commission's recommendation that there be a special investigation of what it called the "pervasive" belief among many citizens of corruption in government.

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"Either we reestablish faith in the belief that government can get on with the job of honestly acting to solve our enormous physical and human problems or face the end of democracy and the political process as we know it," Addonizio said.

The Mayor said he hoped that the commission's "quite broad and sensational statements" on corruption would not obscure "our very real problems in such things as housing, education and jobs" and would not "ruin a lot of honest, hard-working city employees".

"The commission painted with a very broad brush, but I think that if we move vigorously we can avoid any McCarthy-like atmosphere", he said.

"I think a solid investigation must be supported. ~~recommendations~~ that I am tired of innuendo, tired of whisperings and tired of rumor. I want facts. I want names. I want places. If there are corrupt men in government, let's find them and let's find, at the same time, those who do the corrupting," Addonizio said.

The Mayor said he was studying the report in detail, but that he was prepared to adopt "every recommendation" in the report.  
~~and doesn't set you on for revolution~~  
"We have got to move forward. Change is necessary and I am ready to act, to produce that change," he said.

The Mayor said that while he endorsed the report, he felt that in addition to the danger of the corruption charge overshadowing all others, there was one further problem:

"I would have hoped that the commission, in its desire to alert people to all the problems, would have taken a very strong stand against racism, black as well as white, and that it would have said again and again, that riot cannot be permitted in American life."

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~~anywhere~~, "the police, state and local, got a going-over, but there was not a word of censure for the rioters. I presume the writers of the report, in their desire to make a point, misplaced some of their common sense."

"It is certainly true that police-community relations is a tremendous problem, one which I intend to meet head-on, but the police didn't make our society, they must try to enforce its laws. I am sure each and every man on the force would have preferred to be safe at home rather than on the streets of Newark exchanging gunfire with rioters," he said.

"It would have been well ~~for~~ to remember a policeman and fireman died, too."

"I think in the long run that all responsible citizens will agree that terror must be met and put down. I wish the commission had added that rioting was insanity and that it was not going to be permitted, period," he said.

He said he thought the report was "heart-felt and honest, representing a group of men trying their very best."

"I think they got an education in city problems and I hope that when the sensationalism dies down that what they have written about the roots of our problems will be read and understood."

He also again voiced doubt that sufficient funds will be produced by either the state or federal government to undertake a number of commission recommendations.

"The commission did a good job of indicting the state for failure to adequately support local municipalities. I hope the commissioners will stand with me in a drive to get the necessary funds," Addonizio said. (3)